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## **Senate Passes Lotus Blossom Bill**

*Bill designates State's Clean Water Symbol*

**May 27, 2003**-The Michigan Senate passed Senate Bill 106 today, which designates the American lotus blossom as the official state symbol for clean water. SB 106, sponsored by Senator Bev Hammerstrom (R-Temperance), was introduced after a Monroe County resident made the suggestion at one of the Great Lakes Taskforce hearings conducted in 2001. The bill is now on its way to the House of Representatives.

Jeanne Micka, past president of the Monroe County Lotus Garden Club, spoke of the nation's largest aquatic plant and the fear of the blossom's possible extinction in Michigan due to sewage discharges and industrial pollution in the Great Lakes.

"The American lotus is the largest aquatic wildflower," said Micka. "Its beautiful yellow blossoms are a symbol of excellent water quality because it flourishes in the clean water of America's wetlands, where it serves as a food source for waterfowl and provides a massive natural habitat."

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Hammerstrom re-introduced the bill this session after it failed to move last session. "I am pleased that we were able to recognize Mrs. Micka's tireless efforts," said Hammerstrom. "She and the members of the Monroe County Lotus Garden Club have worked hard to educate the public about the lotus blossom and its beauty. This bill represents her vision of establishing the lotus blossom as Michigan's clean water symbol."

Since the Taskforce hearings ended, the lotus blossom has made a dramatic comeback and beds of the plant have shown up along the Lake Erie shoreline. This surprise abundance has led the City of Monroe to adopt the lotus blossom as its official city logo.

In addition to its habitation in Monroe, the lotus has also been identified in four other counties across Michigan, including Berrien, Kalamazoo, Ottawa and Wayne.

The Monroe County Convention and Tourism Bureau has arranged a free lotus tour on September 19, 2003 at 9:00 a.m. Anyone wishing to participate should register with the Bureau by calling, toll-free, 1-800-252-3011.